

Leadership of the Technology Coordinator

“The single most important thing we can do is to make sure we’ve got a world-class education system for everybody. That is a prerequisite for prosperity.” That was President Barack Obama’s call to action to support his 2009 educational reform goal for the United States to reclaim the world’s lead in proportion of college graduates by 2020. Undoubtedly, technology has, and is currently, transforming education and is playing a crucial role in impacting teaching and learning practices within schools (Culp, Honey, & Mandinach, 2005).

In response to this transformation and President Obama’s ambitious goal, the United States Department of Education (USDOE) responded in 2010 with the National Education Technology Plan: *Transforming American Education: Learning Powered by Technology*. Overall, the plan calls for the application of advanced technologies that are used in daily personal and professional lives to the entire education system in attempts to improve learning, accelerate the adoption of effective practices, and for continuous improvement on these practices through the data and information obtained. (USDOE, 2010). More specifically, the plan presents five goals relating to each of the essential components of technology powered learning: Learning, Assessment, Teaching, Infrastructure, and Productivity. Some of these goals include:

1. “States should continue to revise, create, and implement standards and learning objectives using technology for all content areas that reflect 21st-century expertise and the power of technology to improve learning” (USDOE, 2010).

2. “States, districts, and others should design, develop, and implement assessments that give students, educators, and other stakeholders timely and actionable feedback about student learning to improve achievement and instructional practices” (USDOE, 2010).
3. “Expand opportunities for educators to have access to technology-based content, resources, and tools where and when they need them” (USDOE, 2010).
4. “Ensure that every student and educator has at least one Internet access device and appropriate software and resources for research, communication, multimedia content creation, and collaboration for use in and out of school” (USDOE, 2010).
5. “Develop useful metrics for the educational use of technology in states and districts” (USDOE, 2010).

In attempts to implement and achieve these national goals, a school district or individual school calls on a Technology Coordinator to facilitate these standards. In the simplest, broadest terms, a technology coordinator is responsible for promoting technology integration in a school district or school. Described as a “position with a protocol,” in *The Technology Coordinator’s Handbook*, Frazier and Bailey define the role of a technology coordinator as one which requires “wearing many hats” (2004). A few of these hats include: Instruction, Technical Support, Analysis, and Leadership, which all coincide with the goals laid forth by the USDOE in 2010. When a technology coordinator embraces their “multi-hat” position, they are also assuming a crucial role as a leader of the task of developing effective and productive school environments.

In *The Art and Science of Leadership*, Afsaneh Nahavand stated “leaders play a key role in the development and communication of the vision” (2006). This idea is supported by Frazier and Bailey when they state, “First and foremost, a tech coordinator must be able to establish and

articulate a vision for the use of technology in the school or district, as well as develop a plan for successfully carrying out that vision” (2004). Building upon that, the vision of a technology coordinator must incorporate four main areas of responsibility: 1) appropriate technology use policies; 2) procuring and maintaining technology resources; 3) implementing an effective professional development program; and 4) providing technical support for all technology users (Frazier and Bailey, 2004).

With a vision established, a technology coordinator can begin to apply their leadership to the many “hats” they are required to wear. The first place technological leadership can be beneficial is in the technological integration in the instruction and curriculum of the district or school. Technology coordinators must “apply and implement curriculum plans that include methods and strategies for utilizing technology to maximize student learning” (Twomey, Shamburg, and Zieger, 2006). Through this demonstration of instruction, classroom, and pedagogical knowledge, teachers should come to respect a technology coordinators position and make a connection with them. “By inspiring teachers to use technology effectively in the classroom... tech coordinators can have the greatest impact on student education and motivation” (Frazier and Bailey, 2004).

Leadership in the area is also essential for professional development. “The technology coordinator needs to be able to inspire teachers with a vision of how effective technology integration can benefit them and demonstrate activities, lesson plans, and processes that make exciting use of technology resources” (Frazier and Bailey, 2004). As a leader, the importance of understanding the developmental needs of a faculty, and equipping them with the necessary tools and skills to enhance learning with technology cannot be underestimated (Reeves, 2004).

Technology coordinators also need to be viewed as technological leaders. In terms of technical expertise, technology coordinators are responsible for new technology resource recommendations and purchasing, and for providing technical and networking support. This area is potentially the most “sensitive” areas when it comes to achieving technological implementation goals. One of the leading factors, or excuses, in the lack of technology integration is the dependability, or lack there of, on technology use. “They need to be able to maintain technology equipment and materials” (Twomey, Shamburg, and Zieger, 2006).

As leaders, technology coordinators must obtain the trust of administrators and teachers in the technological resources provided. They need to be able to fully depend on these resources as viable teaching tools in the classroom, and know support is readily available when issues arise. If technical problems frequently arise and teachers have to wait hours or days for support to resolve those issues, they will both abandon their efforts to incorporate technology and change their view of the technology coordinator as a leader. Technology coordinators can avoid this through demonstrating leadership by helping teachers, students, and administrators overcome obstacles in times of technological crisis’.

In a third broad role, the technology coordinator should be viewed as a leader with an “analytical” hat. It is not enough to simply implement and support a technology integration; the technology coordinator is also responsible for analyzing and assessing the effectiveness of the implementation. The overall goal of a technology coordinator of a school or district, and the USDOE National Educational Technology Plan is to best leverage technology in the classroom to improve student performance. In accordance with those goals, data collection and analysis “on how and when technology is used will be able to determine the difference it makes and use that

knowledge to improve outcomes and the productivity of our education system” (USDOE, 2010).

In this role the technology coordinator assumes a leadership position of making assessments, adjustments, and decisions in order to reach the ultimate goal of the school or district.

As outlined above, leadership plays an important factor in many of the hats, and therefore, in the embodied role of a technology coordinator. Frazier and Bailey state that a technology coordinator is a leader “who blazes the trail for technology in the school or district and who understands how all hardware, software, policies, and procedures fit together in the big picture of the school’s or the district’s technology implementation plan” (2004). Leadership, by definition, “is the art of motivating a group of people to act towards achieving a common goal” (www.about.com). Technology coordinators are tasked with the responsibility of meeting those goals set forth by the United States Department of Education and accepted by districts and school. By demonstrating a strong knowledge of both teaching and learning and providing support and development, a technology coordinator can gain the trust and support of administrators and faculty and achieve the goal of an effective technology plan implementation.

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